

## Traffic Safety News and Facts for Employers September 23, 2004

### NETS Feature

#### **Michigan Employers Consider Cell Phone-Driving Bans**

Some Michigan employers are moving to restrict or ban their employees from using cell phones while driving. Recently, the Michigan State Police reported that 870 traffic crashes involving cell phones occurred in 2002. According to an Auytobytel survey of online car buyers, 83 percent of drivers use a cell phone while driving, although 70 percent of these drivers consider the practice unsafe. A 1997 study in the New England Journal of Medicine said the hand-held phones posed about as much of a problem for drivers as drunken driving. The study found the chance of a crash was four times greater when using a hand-held cell phone. The Michigan Senate is considering a bill that could add a point to a drivers record and a \$25 fine if it is determined that a cell phone contributed to a traffic violation.

Since 2001, General Motors Corp. has asked employees to use handsfree devices such as headsets or OnStar when driving company or personal vehicles while conducting company business. Smaller companies like Consumers Concrete of Kalamazoo have banned the use of cell phones altogether for employees while driving on the job. Director of Safety, Lisa Boreham of Consumers Concrete added, "we implemented our cell phone policy in September 2003 and have had it added to our union contracts as well. We had major support from our current insurance carrier. I think that if you get all of the important players at the table to discuss the issue, everyone is in agreement that it only makes good business sense. (or should I say cents!)"

#### **How Does Traffic Drive Your Business?**

If it feels like you are sitting in more traffic lately, you probably are. According to the 2004 Urban Mobility Report, published by the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI), traffic congestion is growing across the nation in cities of all sizes, consuming more hours of the day, and affecting more travelers, and shipments of goods than ever before. More.....

[http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/9\\_15\\_04a.asp](http://www.trafficsafety.org/newsletter/9_15_04a.asp)

### Latest Traffic Safety News

#### **TTI Releases 2004 Urban Mobility Report**

The Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) in its recently released 2004 Urban Mobility Report reported that traffic congestion is increasing across the nation in cities of all sizes, consuming more hours of the day, and affecting more travelers and shipment of goods than ever before. According to the report, since 1982, annual delay per peak period has grown from 16 hours to 46 hours and the annual financial cost of traffic congestion has grown from \$14 billion to more than \$63 billion. It also found that a total of 5.6 billion gallons of fuel has been lost to engines idling in traffic jams. In response to the results, the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced short term and long-term solutions to reduce congestion including the creation of high-occupancy toll lanes with states adjusting the toll rate based on congestion, the use of ramp metering technology to better facilitate traffic movement on and off highways, and improving traffic signal timing to match traffic patterns and avoid gridlock. For more information visit <http://tti.tamu.edu/media/releases/2004/mobility.stm> and <http://www.dot.gov/affairs/dot16704.htm>. View the full report at <http://mobility.tamu.edu/>

### **Poll: Driver Behavior Growing Source of Aggravation**

According to a new national poll conducted by "Drive for Life," 40 percent of drivers describe driving as "aggravating" and "more aggravating than two years ago" and attribute their aggravation to other drivers. According to the poll, 18 percent of the participants said aggressive drivers pose the biggest threat on the road, second only to alcohol-impaired drivers. The results also revealed that while 98 percent of the participants rate vehicle safety as important, driving behaviors often fall short of safety standards: 26 percent said they drove after drinking alcohol, 12 percent don't always wear their seat belts, and 20 percent don't require passengers to wear seat belts. For more information visit <http://www.safedrivingtest.com/newpoll.html>

### **'Smart Cars' to Make Driving Safer**

More and more automakers are adding electronic technologies to their vehicles to compensate for common driver errors, which according to an article in the New Jersey Star-Ledger account for more than 90 percent of all traffic crashes. New safety systems are anticipated to alert drivers of objects that are hidden in blind spots, vibrate driver seats or jolt steering wheels to warn drivers they are not staying alert, and communicate with other vehicles in the vicinity. Read the full article at <http://nj.com/living/ledger/index.ssf?/base/living-2/1094359879112760.xml>

### **New Tracking System Helps Police, Prosecutors Track Impaired Drivers**

Tennessee police officers and prosecutors are hoping to make the roads safer by keeping impaired drivers off the roadways with a new on-line tracking data system developed by industrial psychologists at the University of Memphis. Alcohol impaired driving accounted for 37 percent of the 1,193 people who died on Tennessee roads last year. According to Mothers Against Drunk Driving, repeat offenders account for nearly 20 percent of all alcohol-related deaths. The new system will allow judges and prosecutors to check a person's arrest record in neighboring counties. The system is set to debut in the 13th Judicial District with plans to use the system statewide. Read the full article at <http://memphis.bizjournals.com/memphis/stories/2004/09/06/story2.html?t=printable>

### **Federal, State, Local Governments Working to Reduce Rural Fatality Rate**

According to recent research by the US General Accounting Office, every day approximately 70 people die on rural roads. The agency also found that in 2002, fatalities on rural roadways accounted for more than 60 percent of all traffic fatalities. Rural road fatalities are caused by four primary factors including human behavior, the care victims receive after the crash, unsafe vehicles, and hazardous roadway conditions. In addition to these factors, fast cars traveling with slow-moving vehicles, such as farm equipment, and failure to use seat belts also contribute to high fatality rates in rural areas. To reduce the rural fatality rate, governments and organizations at the Federal, state, and local levels are working to secure funds that would improve signs, markings, lights, and make other safety enhancements on rural roadways. Read the full article at [http://americancityandcounty.com/mag/government\\_driving\\_death/](http://americancityandcounty.com/mag/government_driving_death/)

### **New Guide: Improving Alcohol Interventions Can Improve Traffic Safety**

Ensuring Solutions to Alcohol Problems of the George Washington Medical Center released its latest primer, "Common Ground: Improving Highway Safety With More Effective Interventions for Alcohol Problems," outlining how improving the quality of driving under the influence (DUI) interventions can also advance highway safety. Alcohol impaired driving is responsible for 41 percent of all traffic crashes, and according to experts, a DUI arrest is often indicative of an alcohol problem. The primer explores how improving today's methods of intervention can prevent recidivism among drivers who have been arrested for impaired driving. View the full primer at <http://www.ensuringsolutions.org/pages/primer/primer7/primer7.html>

## News from USDOT

### **NHTSA Supports Event Data Recorders**

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) has proposed new regulations that would standardize the data collection and retrieval systems for event data recorders (EDR) by 2008. Under the proposal, NHTSA would require the collected data be disclosed to those who own or lease the vehicle. According to the agency, there are 30 million EDRs on the road and 90 percent of new models will have the devices. The proposal stopped short of mandating the use of EDRs, saying it was satisfied with the volunteer actions of the carmakers. The National Transportation Safety Board says that EDRs are critical to improving vehicle safety and that their use should be mandatory.

### **FMCSA to Propose Rule on On-Board Recorders**

The Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) is expected to propose a rule that focuses on using electronic on-board recorders to improve hours-of-service (HOS) compliance. According to FMCSA, recorders will improve HOS rules enforcement and ultimately lead to better health for drivers. FMCSA is accepting comments on the proposal until November 30th. View the notice in the Federal Register at [http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rulesregs/fmcsr/final/04-19907\\_EOBRs.pdf](http://www.fmcsa.dot.gov/rulesregs/fmcsr/final/04-19907_EOBRs.pdf)

### **FHWA Report Examines Congestion, Potential Solutions**

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) released "Traffic Congestion and Reliability: Linking Solutions to Problems," a new report that summarizes recent trends in congestion, how it effects travel times, and potential solutions to the problem. The report also investigates the various sources of congestion, ways to address congestion by targeting these sources, and performance measures for monitoring these recent trends. View the full report at [http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion\\_report/index.htm](http://www.ops.fhwa.dot.gov/congestion_report/index.htm)

### **FMCSA Releases New Report on Car-Truck Collisions**

FMCSA recently released new research regarding collisions between large trucks and other vehicles on the roadway. The goal of the study is to improve knowledge about the high-risk behaviors of truck and vehicle drivers that lead to crashes. In 1998, large trucks accounted for 7 percent of the total vehicle miles traveled but were involved in 13 percent of all traffic fatalities. To address this issue, FMCSA has set a goal to reduce truck-involved crashes by 41 percent by 2008. For more information and to view the full report visit <http://www.tfhr.gov/safety/hsis/pubs/04085/index.htm>

### **NHTSA Launches Impaired Driving Labor Day Crackdown**

More than 9,000 law enforcement agencies across the country participated in the National Impaired Driving Labor Day Crackdown, "You Drink and Drive. You Lose." on August 27th through September 11th. In 2003, alcohol-related fatalities declined to their lowest level since 1999. A total of 17,013 alcohol-related fatalities were recorded in 2003, down 511, or 3 percent, from 17,524 in 2002. The campaign started in 2002 to fund stepped up enforcement and paid advertising. For more information visit [http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/StopImpaired/YD&DYL\\_LaborDay\\_Planner/index.htm](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/alcohol/StopImpaired/YD&DYL_LaborDay_Planner/index.htm)

## International Traffic Safety News

### **Canadian Fleet First to Adopt Vision-based Safety System**

Calgary's East West Express is the first trucking company in the world to implement a new vision-based safety system combining a lane departure warning (LDW) system with forward collision warning (FCW) capabilities, and headway monitoring. The system is the first of its kind to combine three

applications in one system using a single camera. Fifty-five East West Express trucks are equipped with the new system. The cameras are one cubic inch and are mounted on the front windshield. Read the full article at

[http://www.trucknews.com/issues\\_TWT/ISarticle.asp?id=153698&story\\_id=%207417125420&issue=08012004&PC=TWT](http://www.trucknews.com/issues_TWT/ISarticle.asp?id=153698&story_id=%207417125420&issue=08012004&PC=TWT)

### **Europe Makes Effort to License Disabled People**

The Swedish Road and Transport Research Institute is working to create a standardized method to help European driving assessment centers properly determine the driving abilities of people with disabilities. Known as "Consensus," the project is anticipated to eliminate disparities that allow a person with a certain disability to obtain a license in one EU country, but not in another. The project consists of a pan-European network that has reviewed various assessment methods in different countries and is in the process of compiling an on-line database of best practices that will be available to the 50 participating organizations and 13 European countries. For more information visit

<http://istresults.cordis.lu/index.cfm/section/news/tpl/article/BrowsingType/%20Features/ID/69833>

### **Work/Life**

#### **Teen Drivers Head Back To School**

As students across the country are heading back to school, they are learning to balance early weekday mornings and after school and weekend activities. To keep up with their busy schedules, it is important for teens to get adequate sleep, especially if they are driving. Drivers under the age of 25 are especially vulnerable to drowsy driving and account for more than one-half of all fall-asleep crashes. The National Sleep Foundation (NSF) encourages parents to help their teens develop a healthy sleep routine to reduce their risk. For more information visit,

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/PressArchives/seven.cfm> and

<http://www.sleepfoundation.org/children/childrenandsleep.cfm>. The National Center on Sleep Disorders Research and the National Institutes of Health Office of Science Education have produced a sleep curriculum appropriate for biology and science students in grades 9-12. Download the teacher's guide at <http://science-education.nih.gov/supplements/nih3/sleep/default.htm>